

Blind in One Eye
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It is easy for one to become so obsessed with an idea that he becomes blind to everything else. The idea may in itself be good and wholesome, but when a man becomes so enamored of it that he cannot see inter-related ideas and truths he is at least blind in one eye.

Usually one who has been looking at one idea a long time, when he suddenly becomes aware of another truth, transfers all his attention from the former idea to the newly discovered one. He is still a hobbyist; he has simply changed horses.

This is the dynamic that makes an extremist usually swing to the opposite extreme. He is dead sure he has the truth on a point. Suddenly he discovers that there are other mitigating and ameliorating truths interlocked with it. In reckless abandon he forsakes the little truth he once held entirely and embraces with exuberance the often seemingly opposite. Instead of walking circumspectly, as Paul urged, he continues—blind in one eye.

Extreme legalists are that way. Having found the passages that deal with the binding nature of the Word, they allow no room for expediency whatever. The extreme conservatives among us could have been of great value to the church in warning and calling us back to the scriptures. However, unable to see anything but legalism—being blind in one eye—they have caused greater harm than good.

One of the latest glaring examples of this blindness is the current writing and speaking of W. Carl Ketcherside. Brother Ketcherside for over half a lifetime was the champion of one of the more narrow views held among brethren. He was blind to everything except the exceptionally narrow pathway of Sommeritish Ketchersidism. Admittedly his position had some truth, and the brotherhood could well have used some of his warnings, even then. But he was blind to everything else except the Ketcherside hobby.

Suddenly Brother Ketcherside saw something. He suddenly became "sick and tired of the bitter wrangling and jarring of the party spirit." He suddenly found that he could not "answer the prayer of Jesus for oneness by the advocacy of division." That was a commendable discovery. He could have contributed something valuable to the Restoration Movement, except that when he discovered this, to him new truth, he completely lost sight of any former truth he held, and now counts nothing at all of value except his new ecumenical concept of brotherhood. To him this truth is new and all-important. To the rest of us it is as old as the hills. It would have been well for him and for us if he had possessed the capacity to hold on to the elements of truth he once possessed concerning God's word as a sole standard of authority, and at the same time could have been able to embrace also the truth of brotherhood. As it is, he has swung from the extreme of the narrowest of sectarian spirits to the broadest cover-everything-stand-for-nothing liberalism. We suppose he is like some other brethren who think there is no middle of the road. Why does a man have to swing from one extreme to another? Why does he have to be blind in one eye?

Brother Ketcherside's writings over the past six months have presented some profound truths and these truths have been couched in some of the best writing language of our generation. This makes the insidious error these writings contain even the more dangerous. The error is cunningly dressed in outer robes of truth. The wolf is wearing the sheep's fleece. And the real danger rests in the fact that many of the brethren can't tell a wolf from a sheep, even when each is wearing its own fleece, much less when a camouflage is used.

Brother Ketcherside's serious indictments of all groups of the splintered Restoration Movement simply are not true. It may be true that certain narrow segments such as the extremely legalistic element with which he was himself affiliated until recently, hold the unbrotherly attitudes toward all others which he mentions, but most of us do not. There is one way into the kingdom of God, and all men who come into it come in the same way, and are equally the children of our Father. They may err but they err as brethren. Once born into the family one cannot become unborn. Once a brother always a brother—even though engrossed in error. None of the brethren, so far as we knew until Ketcherside's writings: felt equal to the task of un-brothering their brethren. Any brother who fell into error was considered as an erring brother—not as a re-alienated alien!

Based upon this gross error, Brother Ketcherside writes some of the good things relative to the treatment brethren should receive at each other's hands. But when his writings are viewed against the background of the erroneous premise from which he wrote, his writings become rank liberalism. They become liberalism because they tend to discount the divisive nature of truth, and allow for an existential interpretation of it. Unity is fine, but unity at the expense of truth is despicable. Truth is a standard to which all the brethren must true their spiritual houses. The mere fact that we are brethren does not in the least force us to accept unscriptural matters of faith or practice on the part of brethren in error.

Brother Ketcherside seems not to be able to see that truth separates as well as unites. Brethren are united only when they see alike. The fact that they get together on one thing does not preclude that they will be united on all other things. Ketcherside's panacea for all our ills is nothing more than the cover-all-stand-for-nothing fact of brotherhood. Brotherhood because of a common Fatherhood must never be accepted as a substitute for divine acceptability. Brotherhood is not a synonym for unity.

We must never lose sight of the fact that the Holy Spirit himself, through the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, may create divisions among brethren. When any group of them embraces error the Scriptures themselves demand division. We are fully in favor of easing tensions and of uniting brethren, but we do not believe for a minute that the simple fact that we be brethren is grounds enough to insure unity. Unity is based upon more sure and sacred ground than that. Brother Ketcherside is blind in one eye— and if the blind shall lead the blind they both will fall into the ditch.